

March 6, 2022

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) located along 30 miles in the heart of Fairfield County, I write to ask you to support Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants program to \$6 million.

As you may be aware, in Fall, 2021, DEEP issued a request for recreational trails proposals with only \$3 million available, and received 65 applications requesting over \$22 million.

The \$3 million was granted to twenty worthy projects, but another \$7 million in highly ranked proposals were unable to be funded, and we expect the ongoing need for investments in Connecticut's outdoor recreation infrastructure to continue. Unfortunately, funding for a demonstration trail in Danbury, CT was one of the applications that fell into this category.

Trails are an important investment for the future of all the communities along the NRVT. During the pandemic, sections of the NRVT saw an increased use of over 250%!

Funding from the Recreational Grants Program and other private and public sources recently added nearly 3 miles to the NRVT to great acclaim in Norwalk, Wilton, and Redding but, now more than ever, more miles are needed.

Trails are one of the best ways that bond funds can be invested. Recreational trails for hiking, running, biking, dog walking, and time in nature attract and sustain families and businesses, create healthy communities, and foster a high quality of life.

Please support HB 5291.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Mitch Ancona
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